



THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA

HEAD OFFICE, MONTREAL

November, 1947

BUSINESS men, who pay large sums in taxes to defray the cost of public health services, and donate millions of dollars every year to health causes, are too often negligent about looking after their own well-being.

It is not a fair attitude. Even if they don't care, personally, whether they live to a green old age (and some really act as if that were true) every man owes something to his family, his firm and his country. The more successful and enterprising he is, the greater gap his passing will leave in many lives.

This article is to suggest that it is time to pause and ask: "How fast am I going — and where?" It will not attempt to tell what you should or should not do, and it is not a prescription for whatever ails you. It will simply point to some features about health, and hint at a few things that may add happy years to your useful life.

Not all ailments can be pinned down to bodily illness, and much of this Monthly Letter will be about upsets originating in the mind. It is an indisputable fact that these two — mind and body — go closely in harness. For this reason physicians are more and more breaking away from the last century idea of treating a patient's body as a kind of phenomenon in a vacuum. Symptoms of illnesses must be looked upon as being the result of the patient's past life, present environment, economic, social and cultural experiences.

Throughout this letter, when a distinction is made for the sake of clarity between body and mind mechanisms, it should be recalled that man is a totality whose sorrows and ambitions, fears and hopes, all share in determining his physical condition.

Some are inclined to brush off efforts to improve their health with the statement that bad health is the inevitable result of the changed pace at which life is lived. Earlier civilizations had, relative to their stage of development, just as onerous conditions, just as exciting and worrisome experiences, but they were forced, by the lack of modern inventions, to have periods of inactivity.

As illustrations, consider the following:

The absence of adequate artificial light forced many projects to be confined to daylight hours: now they are carried on into the night.

The slowness of transportation gave much more leisure in travelling, though there was less comfort.

The slow rate of communication forced transactions to be spread over a longer period of time.

The dearth of professional entertainment — stage, screen, radio and others — left time for meditation and thought.

The dispersal of a smaller population over rural districts provided fewer social contacts than are necessitated by today's urban crowding.

As a prominent physician said to us when discussing this subject: "Not so very many years ago the words 'meditation' and 'contemplation' commanded a good deal of respect. Some people published their 'Meditations', and 'The Contemplative Life' was considered to be quite respectable and not without value to the community. Since then, in our Western civilization, the fashion has grown of putting more emphasis on 'doing' rather than 'thinking'. Many people have formed the habit of filling every waking hour with 'doing something', so that they are incapable of spending an hour alone with their thoughts without being bored and unhappy."

Throughout the change one principle holds true: whatever the strain or crisis, whipping a tired horse may make it go faster for a lap or two, but it doesn't help the horse's physical well-being. On occasion, such as in time of war, men and women become expendable and are used up at a fast rate. In normal times no man owes it to himself or to anyone else to whip himself into physical or nervous exhaustion.

People, of course, deny that they are under tension or strain. They think that to admit being upset would be somehow degrading. They keep piling up grains of irritation, like the drunken Rip Van Winkle in Jefferson's play, who excused himself for every fresh tittle by saying: "I won't count this one." Well, he

may not count it, but it is being counted none the less. Down among the cells and tissues the count goes on, registering, and storing it up to be used against him. "Nothing we ever do," said Professor James, "is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out."

It is wrong to look upon emotional states as merely reflecting bodily states. They
Emotions quite as often determine the well-being of the body. Not hard work, but bottled-up emotion is the corrosive force eating away many a man's health and tranquillity.

We are told by a Montreal physician that evidence from scientific investigation suggests that the emotions arise from the region of the inter-brain, an area below the cerebral cortex which is concerned mainly with thought and intelligence. They make manifest their effects through the involuntary nervous system which is mainly distributed to internal organs of the body, such as the heart and blood vessels, the kidneys, the stomach and intestines, the glands of internal secretion and involuntary muscles. Therefore, as one might suspect, the effect of emotions is mainly felt by these organs.

The location of the centre for emotions being below the cerebrum or "thinking" part of the brain suggests they developed at an earlier stage in our evolution. It is believed that they were important means of defence which enabled our remote ancestors to survive. For example, anger marshalled all the powers of the body to fight; fear caused flight from danger; love perpetuated the race.

The function of the emotions has been partially taken over by the intellect, and the thinking part of our brain is able to modify them to some extent, but not completely. Thus we cannot stop growing angry, feeling afraid or being in love, but we can control the effect of our emotions to a considerable extent.

These emotions which were so useful and necessary to our ancestors are quite often a nuisance and a danger in our present civilization, although they are still of definite value. Perhaps the most difficult task every man has to face during life is to modify and control his emotions so that he will preserve their values and avoid their ill-effects.

Let's mention worry as one ingredient in tension.
Worry Everyone knows that a man in laughing, cheerful, kindly, happy mood is less likely to be sick or fatigued than if his mood is one of discontent, grief or despair, but many persons who are doing important jobs find themselves in need of treatment because their moods are getting them down.

It is generally conceded that worry can be beaten if problems are honestly sought out, faced up to, and analysed. If the problem is actually your business, don't brush it aside. Tackle it. If you solve it, you have nothing more to worry about; if it is a problem you can't solve after honestly trying, then you must write it off as you do a bad debt. Should the worry

be about something that is not your business, or something remote about which you can do nothing, make a clean sweep of it out of your mind.

Some people will say: "It's easy enough to talk like that, but not so easy to do." Right there is where the danger lies. Just as soon as a useless worry shows signs of seizing a firm hold upon you is the time to abandon appeasement and take grim measures. The resulting effort will not be nearly so difficult as you think, nor so depressing as the effect of allowing worry to degenerate into nervous breakdown.

Heart diseases account for more deaths in North America than the total of the next
Heart Diseases five major causes of death. The fatalistic acceptance of this situation may be caused by an apathetic "it can't be helped — it's part of human nature" outlook, similar to the way people looked upon plagues in the 14th and 15th centuries.

Dr. Hans Selye, whose recently published volume in the monumental "Encyclopedia of Endocrinology" is hailed as a great contribution to medicine, has made interesting statements regarding heart ailments. Dr. Selye, whose laboratory is in the University of Montreal building, has conducted ten years' intensive research, and just a few months ago he told a Maclean's Magazine writer he believes diseases of the heart and circulatory system are the result of continual worry, fear and overwork. They are diseases practically unknown among animals in their natural state and among primitive peoples living an agrarian life. However, once affected, the heart needs treatment, and Dr. Selye is attacking this clinical part of the job in hospitals in both Canada and the United States by both diet and medication. Dr. John A. Oille, one of Canada's leading heart specialists, contributed an article on "Exercise the Heart" to a recent issue of the magazine "Health". If given reasonable work to do, says Dr. Oille, the heart will perform in a way to put the best man-made machine to shame.

Many of us become puzzled when, feeling badly,
"Nothing Organically Wrong" we visit the doctor and he tells us there is nothing organically wrong with us. Certainly, the suffering seems real enough to us. If it keeps up, even after the physician's assurance, it probably means that we are the victims of tension.

Trouble in your stomach or a pain in your neck or the feeling that you are coming down with pneumonia may all result from emotional unrest, and this, if neglected, may lead into nervous disorders of various kinds. Probably no affliction is more misunderstood, in spite of its widespread nature. In an article in Nation's Business for June entitled "You Don't Have To Cut Paper Dolls", Lawrence Galton points out that nervous breakdown is mowing an ever widening swath through the ranks of big and little business men. Actually, he says, it is just an emotional crackup, of which the cause is not work or weariness but worry.

The remedy sometimes suggested is to return to the simple life. It is said that while modern invention has relieved physical drudgery it has increased the

nervous strain. Dr. William Harvey, renowned as the first authority to describe the circulation of the blood (in 1616) contributed in an interesting way to this thought. Dr. Harvey carried out an autopsy on Thomas Parr, who died at the rather advanced age of 152 years and 9 months after working hard until he had passed his 130th birthday. Dr. Harvey attributed Parr's death to the change from a frugal diet of subrancid cheese, milk and coarse hard bread to the rich feeding he received in London, and to the change from the healthy air of Shropshire to the foggy climate of the metropolis. He also dwelt upon the important fact that Parr, by leading a peasant's life, free from care owing to its simplicity, contributed to his very advanced age. Parr, who left a son who lived to be 127, was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Parr's kind of "simple life" has little appeal to men of affairs, and today's people would not be willing to exchange the variety and pleasure of their way of life for the chance of living to 152 in the dullness of Parr's village. And yet, many of these selfsame moderns could increase their enjoyment of life and keep living for a longer time if they brought into their lives just a little bit of the calmness, regularity and sensible eating and drinking usually associated in our thoughts with a country village.

It is not necessary to return to the "simple life" of former times completely and permanently, but it might be wise to make an occasional and partial return. This might well be done on annual holidays or weekends.

Leisure hours are frequently not used in a manner to give health and relaxation. The city club, the golf club, the summer home in the country, and even the holiday itself are too often used for business entertainment and the promotion of business affairs and contacts.

Each person must work out his own salvation regarding the kind of holiday that will do him the greatest amount of good, but if he gives the matter some thought he is likely to do better than if he just blindly follows custom.

The first thing is to start both prevention and cure early, a principle emphasized in **What to do About Health** every one of our articles dealing with health. It isn't necessary to have a complete breakdown of the works before seeking an overhaul job. Even if all that is wrong is a personality kink, it's better to get it straightened out before it ties itself into a hard knot. Frightening pains and symptoms often do not arise until the damage is extensive.

If, however, something has happened, and it is too late for prevention, then action must be taken to recover the lost ground and prevent further slipping. Self-prescribed medicines, fads and cults may be harmless diversions, but they do not cure. Only analysis of the situation and discovery of the cause can lead to treatment which will effect a permanent cure. Only a skilled physician is competent to diagnose your condition.

There are a few simple things people can do to help keep their bodies and minds in good working condition. They should slow down and relax every once in a while. Relaxation isn't magic, but it does give the body a chance to pull itself together.

Next to rest comes exercise. Persons who have continuous and heavy responsibilities need to engage in outdoor activity. Watching a game creates tension: participating in it is relaxation, but it is just the best kind of serious and responsible persons who either have no time for exercise or content themselves with attending games as spectators. The kind and extent of exercise to be taken depends upon age, weight, and stage of fitness, and if you have not kept in training don't start in suddenly without consulting your doctor.

Nutrition is important. We have it on authority of Dr. C. Ward Crampton, at one time chairman of preventive medicine of the New York County Medical Association, that whether a man at 60 will be as vigorous as the average man of 40 or decrepit and miserable as the average octogenarian depends largely on diet. Men and women in middle life hesitate to ask for food different from that of the rest of the family, and as a consequence they often get too little calcium, iron and protein, and eat too much starch and sugar. If there is a lack of calcium, for example, the blood will rob the bones to get what it needs, and hence the bones of old people break easily. It is well to check with a medical practitioner whether your body is using efficiently the food you are eating. The most perfect food is useless if your digestive system does not absorb it.

The habit of self-medication with sedative drugs settles nothing, heals nothing and gives only fictitious ease. At the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in Montreal this year it was reported by a New York psychiatrist that overindulgence in bromides leads to four principal varieties of psychoses, sometimes piling up one psychosis on top of another. Simple bromide intoxication is characterized by dullness, sluggishness, forgetfulness and irritability. The administration of some few drugs, if given under the direction of a skilled and competent physician, may be of temporary benefit and thus enable the patient to be more capable of giving calm and thoughtful consideration to his problems.

Many factors enter into making a good business man, but probably the basic need is **Making Business Life Easier** physical and mental health. Alertness has to be coupled with sober judgment and clarity of thought. In guiding his subordinates over obstacles and past dangers, the executive faces a demand upon his energy that only virility of body and keenness of mentality can supply.

An important feature about the lives of successful business men is that they have schooled themselves to save themselves. The executive who takes things coolly has, apparently, plenty of time. He does not seem burdened by his task, yet he gets through more work with less fuss than the man in the next office who says he can spare you only two minutes. The

first man has learned to channel his steam through the cylinders where it does the most effective work; the second lets it go through the whistle, making a lot of noise but wasting its force. The busier and more efficient the man, the clearer his desk, the clearer his mind, and the better prepared he is to tackle new problems.

A rational plan of living would ease the tension of business life greatly. Contrary to what was confidently expected back in war years, the pressure of business life has not eased off. It may be time for a slow down, time to defend yourself against subordinates whose principal job in life seems to be building molehills into mountains for you to dispose of; time to dispense with impossible standards, such as that of being perfect in everything. The executive who is right most of the time is doing very well, and if he is content to be right most of the time he is keeping his mental balance. It is time to abandon the flashiness of great bursts of speed, impressive though they may be, in favour of steady work at a moderate pace. It is time to recall that behaving excitedly does not pay off in results for an executive nearly as well as carrying out his task in a calm manner. No mere mask of composure will do. It is the inward peace and relaxation that counts in your health, not the pretense assumed to create an impression.

More men are living well into their second forty years than ever before. Half a century ago the average life expectancy at birth was between 45 and 50 years; today it is nearly twenty years longer. Much of the increase is due to control of diseases which formerly took great toll of young people. The science of medicine, the spread of good sanitation, and strides in agriculture have contributed to longevity.

Our population is getting older. Between 1921 and 1941 the number of people from 0 to 19 decreased from 43.4 to 37.5 per cent of total population, while persons 65 and over increased from 4.8 to 6.7 per cent of total population. Here are the figures for Canada, abstracted from census reports twenty years apart:

	1921	1941	Increase	Percent increase
Total population	8,787,949	11,506,655	2,718,706	30.94
Ages 0 — 19:	3,816,110	4,318,586	502,476	13.17
Ages 0 — 64:	8,368,859	10,738,840	2,369,981	28.32
Ages 65 and over:	419,090	767,815	348,725	83.21

Interpretation of the significances in that last column must await another time. They affect all of social and economic life, the strength of the nation now and in the next generation. In this Letter we are concerned mainly with the thought that so many more persons are living into ages which, as regards health, were always referred to as the "dangerous ages". It is commonplace to have people say: "Oh, well, after 40 you can't expect . . ." this and that.

It is true that science has not found an injection that provides renewed youth at forty, but it can show how to continue some of the advantages of youth into these later years.

There are four main components of life from adolescence on: work, recreation, physical health and mental health. When these four are balanced, and lead us along creative lines, then life can be very satisfying and will be enjoyed longer.

How are we to achieve this balance? First of all it is necessary to recall that the factors are closely related. If you are emotionally upset, unhappy in your work, deprived of an outlet for your creative urges, your depression may cause pain symptoms in your body.

Next thing is to realize that no hocus-pocus is going to make you over. Get competent advice, start periodical medical examination, and believe your physician. Don't shy away from new practices just because they are different from those to which your grandparents were accustomed.

It is not so many years ago that "psychology" was a highbrow word whose users were looked upon as faddists. Today every high school child knows that it means the science that deals with the human mind and its activities, a science which has yielded knowledge of boundless value to people of this era.

Similarly, "psychoanalysis" was a new word not long ago, and because of misunderstanding and abuse it fell into disrepute. Since it means simply a study of the subconscious mind there need be nothing fearsome about it, and just because a few followers years ago garbled the teachings of Freud is no reason to brush aside a useful aid to mental health.

There has recently come into use another expression which conveys a truth of vast importance to mankind — the connection between mind and matter. It is "psychosomatic (psyche — soul; soma — body) medicine."

The business man having made up his mind that though he feels no aches and pains he had better take ordinary precautions by having a medical examination, may learn that he needs something more than medicine. He will find today's physicians qualified in this field. More and more people are gaining relief at the hands of regular physicians who devote themselves to rational psychotherapy.

The world does not owe anyone health or wealth: they have to be earned. Everybody wishes so to live that he shall extract the greatest satisfaction from living, and it is in this pursuit that the art of living manifests itself. Many people fail in the quest because they never clearly think out just what the most satisfactory things for them may be.

Human beings lead all other animals in the ability to deceive themselves, and it is a common experience for men to devote much time and energy to gaining something which proves in the end to be not what they wanted at all. To live wisely and well is indeed an art and he who gains skill in this greatest of all arts is favoured of the gods.